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SUBJECT: GHANA'S ENVIRONMENT MINISTER SHARES COPENHAGEN EXPECTATIONS
WITH AMBASSADOR

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11. (SBU) SUMMARY: In a meeting with the Ambassador on December 2, Ghana's Environment, Science and Technology Minister, Sherry Ayittey, shared Ghana's expectations for the 15th Conference of the Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change in Copenhagen. The Minister welcomed the provisional 17 percent emissions reduction target that the U.S. announced on November 25. President Obama's attendance at Copenhagen raised hopes that a comprehensive and equitable deal could be reached, she said. At the same time, she urged the U.S. to make substantial financial commitments at Copenhagen to assist developing countries in mitigating and adapting to the effects of climate change. While Ghana is unlikely to break ranks publicly within the Africa Group and G77, Ghana could play a constructive and moderating role to help increase the chances for reaching a deal at Copenhagen. END SUMMARY.

12. (SBU) In a December 2 meeting with Ghana's Minister for Environment, Science and Technology, Sherry Ayittey, the Ambassador shared the U.S. vision for the upcoming Copenhagen Climate Change Summit, including President Obama's attendance and the provisional 17 percent emissions reduction target that the U.S. announced on November 25.

U.S. Engagement Raises Chances for Success

13. (SBU) Minister Ayittey noted that her ministry hosted Ghana's National Climate Change Forum on December 2 (reported septel) and had announced that Ghanaian President John Evans Atta Mills would attend the Copenhagen Summit, while the minister will serve as the deputy head of Ghana's delegation. She said that many developing countries had been worried in recent months about the level of U.S. commitment to the negotiating process, but the announcements of a provisional U.S. emissions reduction target and of President Obama's attendance had significantly raised the prospects of a successful outcome in Copenhagen.

U.S. Target OK, But Needs Aid Behind It

14. (SBU) She noted that the U.S. provisional 17 percent reduction target was actually a bit higher than she had expected, since based on discussions in October, many developing countries had anticipated that the U.S. would not commit to more than a 15 percent reduction in emissions by the Copenhagen Summit. That said, the Minister repeatedly urged the Ambassador to convey the message that President Obama should make a substantial commitment of financial assistance and technology transfer to help developing countries mitigate and adapt to the effects of climate change.

15. (SBU) She maintained that a robust U.S. financial commitment at Copenhagen would build on the "tens of billions" of dollars in commitments and pledges that developing countries were expecting from the UK, EU and Japan. Once there was more clarity on the level of funding and technical assistance that could be expected from the developed world, she noted that Ghana would work to define areas in its climate change and science, technology and innovation policy where there could be potential collaboration with the U.S.

Major Developing States Must Stand Behind Commitments

16. (SBU) In response to the Ambassador's queries regarding emissions targets for the major developing countries, such as China, India and Brazil, the Minister said she agreed with the notion that those countries should make emissions reduction commitments. In the minister's view, China's November 26 announcement of a 40-45 percent reduction in its emissions intensity by 2020 might prove to be "negligible" on an absolute basis, once a careful analysis of the proposal was completed. The minister also accepted the principle that major developing economies' commitments needed to be transparent and verifiable, though she noted that there should be flexibility on the methods of reporting emission reductions.

17. (SBU) The Minister agreed with the Ambassador that the tone at Copenhagen should remain constructive, with a focus on achieving a strong and comprehensive political agreement, and with the prospect of a legally binding agreement to follow at subsequent meetings within the next 3-6 months.

18. (SBU) On other climate change issues, Minister Ayittey noted that Ghana wanted to see a separate agreement at Copenhagen on tropical

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forest conservation and "REDD" (reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation), most likely in the form of an addendum to the main political agreement. She also argued that the Kyoto Protocol should remain in force until 2012 and then could possibly be extended.

COMMENT

19. (SBU) Ghana is not likely to vocally break ranks with the Africa Group or G77 at Copenhagen. That said, Minister Ayittey clearly recognizes the seriousness of the U.S. emissions reduction offer and President Obama's attendance. Ghana could play a constructive role in helping to moderate the rhetoric from more outspoken developing countries, thereby setting a tone in Copenhagen that increases the chances for a successful outcome.

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